

June 1, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you today to express my opinion and concerns regarding the cut in funding to transportation services and specifically ARTS (Aroostook Regional Transportation System) and County Ride. I am against any cuts to services because it would limit our lives.

I use ARTS bus to go out for meals, medical appointments, and socialization at the Harvest Inn Social Club. I pick up prescriptions, visit friends at their homes, go to laundry mat, grocery and household shopping, as well as attend community events. If ARTS is unavailable, County Ride through AMHC assists with non-medical appointments, which would no longer be available to me.

In Aroostook County, there is no other public transportation besides ARTS. If community members wish, they can take a cab. A one way trip, in Caribou is \$7.00. With a fixed income, it will become financially impossible to access all of the needs. Also, there are no major stores in Caribou; the local Wal-Mart is 13 miles away, which is a \$25.00 cab fare one way. Also in Presque Isle is Sears, JC Penny, K-Mart and other large department stores. Caribou itself is limited to the "major chains" of Family Dollar and Shop and Save.

Beyond the financial aspect, there is the importance of socialization. Accessing the community keeps us out of the Crisis Center. Peer interaction is crucial to our mental well-being.

Aroostook County is in its own world. Most people think Northern Maine is Bangor. A call center in Portland will not understand that it is an hour ride to a mall from Fort Kent. They may not grasp that the only Maine Care Dental provider accepting new patients is in Ashland (one hour ride) and some people can NOT walk to a store—because the nearest one is seven miles away.

ARTS and County Ride drivers are like our family, they have gotten to know the members of the community that use them and they treat us with dignity and respect and help us when needed within their limits this had made it easier to use public transportation.

We are rural—but our needs are the same as everyone. We need to get to our medical appointments, we need to go to a laundry mat, and we need to shop for groceries and prescriptions. A cut in the funding of public transportation services would limit our abilities to live our lives.

Some other concerns that I have are as follows:

- What if the broker does not work out will that mean NO transportation?
- If the broker is in a different area they do not know our weather or if we are shut down, they will send ride anyway?
- We will not know if ride is private driver that smokes, has dirty car, rude or even if handicap client can comply with ride which leads to cancelled appointment.
- Cost for rides will increase if we get other than medical that means no low cost for low income
- We are RURAL, not city with no choices of rides for bus rides. WE ARE NOT URBAN and NEVER will be.
- Mental issues will rise due to more shut-ins because of rides not affordable
- 1-800 numbers never work; if you hit the wrong number you do not get a ride.
- If we have a complaint where do we call?

Respectfully Signed,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the person.

Member of Local Caribou Community